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ABSTRACT

One of the greatest barriers to the advancement of women in academia is the lack of sufficient role models or mentors. Although some women have been successful in gaining entry to positions previously dominated by males, there is no legislative provision for economic support for job-related training, either for self-development or for the development or enhancement of skills related to research and writing--the skills deemed imperative for retention, tenure, and ladder-rank advancement in contemporary institutions of higher education. Consequently, many women who have been successful in gaining entry to such positions are being denied these privileges and are being locked into lower paying salary positions than male colleagues. Although mentor relationships are effective in assisting most rising women to gain career advancement and in breaking through to networks for continued research and writing, such relationships present potential danger for others. It is therefore recommended that criteria be developed for the selection of mentors including both personal and professional areas to ensure that such relationships will help rising women develop to their maximum potential in order to enhance opportunities for career advancement. (Author)

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The Role of Mentors In Developing Careers: Do Women Need Mentors?

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Abstract

One of the greatest barriers to the advancement of women in academia is the lack of sufficient role models or mentors. Although some women have been successful in gaining entry to positions previously dominated by males, there is no legislative provision for economic support for job-related training either for self development or for the development or enhancement of skills related to research and writing - the skills deemed imperative for retention, tenure, and ladder rank advancement in contemporary institutions of higher education. Consequently many women who have been successful in gaining entry to such positions are being denied these privileges and are being locked into lower paying salary positions than male colleagues. Although mentor-relationships are effective in assisting most rising women gain career advancement and in breaking through to networks for continued research and writing, such relationships present potential dangers for others. It is therefore recommended that criteria be developed for the selection of mentors including both personal and professional areas to ensure that such relationships will help rising women develop to their maximum potential in order to enhance opportunities for career advancement.

Do Women Need Mentors?

A. Evidence of the Need for Mentors

One of the greatest difficulties for women in the area of educational leadership and research in institutions of higher education is the lack of appropriate role models and mentors. Well-trained personnel who are qualified and willing to serve in these capacities are especially important when self development and professional growth of women are considered. Competent professional leadership and modeling is critical to the support of women who are employed in university positions that have been previously dominated by males.

Although in recent years federal legislation has been supportive of women's rights in equality of job opportunities and has advocated the hiring of women for positions previously dominated by males, there has been no legislative provision for economic support for job-related training either for women's self development or for the development or enhancement of skills essential to job retention or advancement. Simultaneously, institutions of higher education have become adamant in their "publish or perish" stance without providing time, opportunities for development, or other support for such research or writing. Consequently, even though some women have been successful in gaining entry to positions in the field of higher education, many are being denied retention, ladder rank advancement, and become locked into lower paying salary positions than their male colleagues.

Although the 1970's represent a time of awareness of the struggle by women to gain entry to careers which have been traditionally dominated by or accessible to males only, their progress has been slight if indeed at all. Evidence shows that even in the area of higher education, an area which has typically appealed to female students and which generally comprises an above average representation of female students, women faculty are under-represented (Sorgman, 1978, Jackson, 1979).

Sorgman (1978) claims that there is a rate of attrition for women in higher education. She states that while women make up 46% of undergraduate students, the proportion drops to 37% of graduate, 27% of faculty, and less than 9% of full professors. This is collaborated by other recent studies and reports which show that "women faculty in academe appear to be sliding downhill" (Association of American Colleges, 1978 b, p. 2). The project reports that in 1974-75 the percentage of women faculty was 22.5%, in 1975-76 the percentage dropped to 21.7%, while in 1976-77 it rose slightly to 22.4% or just below the 1974-75 figures.

Women who have been successful in gaining entry to full-time faculty positions in institutions of higher education face serious problems. Sorgman (1978) reports that even where women do exist, they are primarily in the lowest non-career rank of instructor or in less prestigious institutions such as junior and community colleges where women make up 40% of the faculty. She also states that less than 50% of the female faculty achieve full professorships as compared to 90% of their male counterparts even when credentials are identical - an earned doctorate and twenty years of service. Other studies show that less than one-third of the women employed in institutions of higher education have been successful in rank advancement beyond the Assistant Professor or entry level rank (Association of American Colleges, 1978b). The actual rank distribution of women faculty show a deteriation from one-third of women faculty at the upper two ranks, full professor and associate professor, in 1976, to 28% so situated in 1977 as compared to 63% males at the upper two levels in 1976 and 62% males in 1977 (Association of American Colleges, 1978b).

Another serious problem faculty women face is that of tenure or job security. Not only do more men receive tenure as compared to women, but they receive tenure at an earlier age (Sorgman, 1978). Along with tenure and rank advancement are the salary differentials that exist between men and women. It appears that women are not only under-represented, but also under-remunerated even when credentials

and productivity are held constant or when employed in the same type of institution with the same job titles (Sorgman, 1978; Association of American Colleges, 1978a; 1978b).

A 1978 (Association of American Colleges, 1978a) project on the status and ecuation of women found that women are paid about four-fifths as much as men with the same job titles at the same type of institution while Sorgman (1978) found that the salary differential of male and female faculty can range from 5% to 50% even when credentials and professional productivity were held constant.

Since writing and research endeavors are essential to retention and ladder rank advancement which generally include salary increments in most colleges and universities, it is imperative for women to engage in these important activities. A review of the literature on women in educational research shows an under-representation of women in this area with a greater percentage of women engaging in the teaching and service areas with less than 1% of the research published in education generated by minorities (Jackson, 1979).

A summary of the literature review indicates that the source of problems women in educational research and development face are mainly due to: 1) lack of female role models, 2) lack of sufficient sponsors or mentors, 3) lower expectations for their careers as compared to men, 4) difficulty in obtaining research funding when one has little or no published research, and 5) need for sponsors to assist women and minorities in achieving professional recognition (Ekstrom, 1978; Association of American Colleges, 1978a; Jackson, 1979).

Problems associated with the lack of sufficient role models and mentors appear as early as the pre-entry level of career development and often become further compounded throughout women's careers.

Jackson (1979) reports a strong relationship between persons holding research assistantships and those accepting research positions. She states that both women

and men are more supportive of students of their own sex, and furthermore, that "since 98% of enrolled women attend male-dominated research institutions, it follows that these women are unlikely to profit from the same closeness with mentors available to male students" (p. 5).

A 1978 project on the status and education of women (Association of American Colleges, 1978a) also supports this belief. The report states that the latest census report on college enrollment reveals that the majority of young college students are female and that although the overall number of women in academia is increasing, the increase is greater for female students than female faculty, thus the female role model is under-represented (p. 5). This report further contends that the greatest barrier to women enrolled in graduate psychology programs is the lack of female role models.

The literature clearly indicates that mid-career women are urgently in need of continued encouragement and support that can be provided through mentor relationships. Such relationships with well qualified researchers who are willing to assist them in enhancing their skills in both personal and professional areas are invaluable to promoting their opportunities for career advancement. Without such guidance and sponsorship, it is extremely difficult to receive funding essential to research and writing, especially for those who have little or no published research. Mentor relationships are also important to promoting professional socialization and entry to the "old boy" networks from which rising women are otherwise likely to be excluded (Ekstrom, 1978; Jackson, 1979).

Recent attempts to enhance the expertise of women and minorities in educational research include a project in the Mid-Atlantic region (Jackson, 1979). The program is based on the assumption that there is a scarcity of role models for women in education and that the predominance of male faculty excludes women from mentor relationship and the "old boy" network. One-year internships in diverse educational settings with mentors commited to the professional development of

their interns have been designed to encourage the persuit of educational research related to special concerns of minorities and women.

Among the conclusions drawn from surveys and incorporated into their training model for advancing women and minorities in research were:

1. The intern working with a mentor on a special project for a minimum of one year and desirous of gaining skills and access to professional services may be preferable to independent research.
2. There are fewer mid-career internship programs for women and minorities in educational research. Such a program should concentrate on giving these persons the expertise and access to senior networks required for advancement.
3. Intern placement close to home, an adequate salary and practical help in maintaining continuity with regular jobs are all important decisions.
4. An internship program must be sufficiently funded.
5. Choice of mentors should be based on qualifications, willingness to help interns and the ability to take personal satisfaction in seeing interns advance.
6. The program should include group and/or individual orientation, special lectures and conferences geared to interns' needs, and group meetings with interns, mentors and other appropriate professional.
7. Formal procedures to evaluation (e.g. intern logs, group meetings, questionnaires) must be included in the program (Jackson, pp. 11-12).

This literature review supports the need for mentor relationships for women at not only the entry level, but also throughout the mid-career level of development. Such relationships appear to be important for women to grow and develop both personally and professionally in skills essential to research and writing - skills recognized as being essential for retention and career advancement in contemporary institutions of higher education. It also indicates that mentor rela-

tionships provide effective means for women to enter into networks with older researchers as a necessary support system for further research and writing.

B. Dangers of Having Mentors

Although most studies and research are supportive of the need for women to establish mentor relationships, this procedure does not always ensure the personal growth and professional development essential for career advancement and success in academia. Potential dangers in such relationships need to be further examined.

For example, when the mentor is dominant or possesses an overpowering personality, the intern may lack assertiveness in persuing her own interests or achieving her own goals. Such a relationship may result in a loss of identity on the part of the intern. Feelings of rivalry and jealousy often develop as the intern and mentor become engaged in joint studies and research. This usually results in a loss of favor for the intern and may cause personal problems as well as professional dilemmas.

Another potential danger for the intern occurs when the mentor withdraws from the relationship. Results are usually dependent upon the type of personalities and the relationship. In cases in which the intern received guidance and support leading toward independence, assertiveness, and self-direction, the intern is likely to succeed in development beyond the relationship. However, if the relationship fostered a dependency on the part of the intern, the withdrawal of the mentor may result in feelings of inadequacy, guilt, uncertainty about one's ability to achieve, and feelings of insecurity over the ability to control one's own situation.

Cliques within a faculty also present problems and can be damaging to the intern's development and career advancement. Other faculty members usually tend to associate the intern with mentor characteristics, personality, and beliefs. They usually relate to the intern in a manner similar to the mentor. If the mentor has a positive relationship with other faculty members, chances are that the

faculty will accept and be favorable toward the intern and vice versa.

Thus intern-mentor relationships need to be considered objectively by all parties involved. Criteria should be developed to establish guidelines and to promote better understandings of the relationship.

C. Outgrowing Mentors

The growing process of an intern-mentor relationship should be and usually is an extremely rewarding situation for both parties. An effective mentor is one who expects the intern to become "more" than herself because she is secure in her own abilities for guidance and instruction. Nevertheless, this is not always the case. Although many professionals who have engaged in this relationship form lasting bonds and continue to communicate throughout their careers, other relationships end with bitter resentment, disappointment, or hostility. This is most often observed when the intern branches out on her own to continue research or to persue new and different experiences. Therefore, one must select mentors carefully using objective criteria which will examine qualifications in both personal and professional areas. These qualifications must include a willingness to help interns and the ability to receive personal satisfaction in seeing interns advance and succeed according to their own personal interests and goals.

Summary:

Overall, the literature indicates that there are many advantages to intern-mentor relationships and that such relationships are important for the support and continued development of rising career women in academia. It also reveals a need for:

1. increasing the number of women who have skills to develop and conduct research;
2. increasing the number of intern-mentor relationships for women in institutions of higher education;

3. increasing the number of sponsors/mentors to assist women in gaining access to senior networks to achieve professional recognition;
4. continuing support for women to increase their skills in conducting research;
5. providing support for sponsors/mentors to assist women in conducting research;
6. increasing the number of women to serve as role models and mentors in institutions of higher educatiopn; and
7. dissemination of information to females upon entry to professional careers about career opportunities in higher ecucation including salaries and "success stories" of other women engaged in research endeavors.

However, because intern-mentor relationships deal with individuals and the uniqueness of personalities, there are potential dangers involved for participants in such relationships. Therefore, it is recommended that objective criteria be developed for selection of mentors and that personality characteristics of both parties be examined before such a relationship is established. This is important if we are to ensure the intern the support and guidance necessary for both personal growth and professional development essential for career advancement.

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